AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

1.   (currently amended) A method for <u>electronically</u> verifying that a user is licensed to access digital content within a content file comprising:

   a)   obtaining a product ID from the content file <u>stored on a user computer, the content file containing the digital content</u>;

   b)   <u>electronically</u> comparing the product ID from the content file with a second product ID found in a product license <u>stored on the user computer</u>;

   c)   obtaining a <u>first</u> user ID from the product license; and

   d)   <u>electronically</u> comparing the <u>first</u> user ID from the product license with a second user ID found in a user license <u>stored on the user computer</u>.

2.   (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the user license further contains personal information that is accessible to the user, such that the user would be reluctant to share the user license with other users.

3.   (original) The method of claim 2, wherein the personal information is a financial access number allowing access to financial resources of the user.

4.   (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the financial access number is a credit card number.

5.   (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the financial access number is of a type chosen from the following set: a bank account number, a gift certificate number, a debit card number, and a stored value card number.

6.   (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

   e)   obtaining identifying system information from the user license; and

   f)   comparing the identifying system information from the user license with identifying information obtained from a computer operating system being used by the user to access the digital content.

7.   (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

   e)   allowing access to a first portion of the digital content when the comparisons of step b) and d) both result in successful comparisons.

8.   (original) The method of claim 7, further comprising:

   f)   allowing access to a second portion of the digital content when either of the comparisons of step b) and d) are not successful.

9.   (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the first portion of the digital content is encrypted and the second portion of the digital content is not encrypted.

10.   (original) The method of claim 7, wherein the first portion of the digital content is encrypted using a product encryption key.

11.   (original) The method of claim 10, wherein the product encryption key is found in the product license.

12.   (currently amended) A method for allowing a user on a computer to electronically access encrypted digital content found in a content file comprising:

    a)   accessing the content file stored on the computer to determine a product identifier found within the content file;

    b)   finding an appropriate product license that has the same product identifier as that found in the content file, the appropriate product license being located in a storage area accessible by stored on the computer;

    c)   accessing the appropriate product license to determine a licensed user identifier associated with the product license;

    d)   finding an appropriate user license stored on the computer that has the same user identifier as that found in the appropriate product license;

    e)   accessing the appropriate product license to determine a decryption key associated with the product license; and

    f)   decrypting the encrypted digital content using the decryption key.

13.   (original) The method of claim 12, wherein non-encrypted data is found in the content file containing the encrypted digital content, and further wherein the non-encrypted data is accessible when the appropriate product license or the appropriate user license is not found.

14.   (original) The method of claim 13, wherein an option to purchase full access rights to the encrypted digital data is presented to the user when the appropriate product license or the appropriate user license is not found.

15-40. (withdrawn)

41.   (new) A system on a user computer for verifying that a user is licensed to access digital content, comprising:

    a)   a computer ID on the user computer uniquely identifying the computer;

    b)   a product in digital form stored on the user computer, the product including the digital content and a unique product ID;

c)   a product license stored on the user computer, the product license including a user ID and the product ID; and

d)   a user license stored on the user computer, the user license including the user ID and the computer ID;

wherein the user ID, the product ID, and the computer ID are data identifiers.

42.   (new) The system of claim 41, wherein the user license further includes personal information about the user.

43.   (new) The system of claim 41, wherein the product, the product license, and the user license are stored in encrypted form.

44.   (new) The system of claim 41, further comprising:

e)   software programming containing an algorithm that compares the product ID in the product with the product ID in the product license, and that compares the user ID in the product license with the user ID in the user license.

45.   (new) The system of claim 44, wherein the algorithm further compares the computer ID on the user computer with the computer ID in the user license.

46.   (new) A system for verifying that a user is licensed to access digital content comprising:

a)   a product including the digital content and data comprising a unique product ID;

b)   a product license stored as a data construct, the product license including a user ID and the product ID;

c)   a user license stored as a data construct, the user license including the user ID; and

d)   software programming containing an algorithm that compares the product ID in the product with the product ID in the product license, and that compares the user ID in the product license with the user ID in the user license.

47.   (new) The system of claim 46, wherein the user license further includes a computer system ID, and further wherein the software program algorithm compares the computer system ID from the user license with a system ID of a computer on which the software program is executing.